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Accustomed as we have been all our lives, and our fathers as well for many centuries, to give the month of February 28 days in common years and 29 days in leap years, what would we say to such a date as February 30, officially ordered as such by one of our modern enlightened and civilized nations? Yet, such was actually the fact in Sweden in 1712. The reader may be interested to know how it came about.

Those among us who know anything at all about calendars, are acquainted with the terms, "O. S."—Old Style, and "N. S."—New Style, or the Julian and Gregorian calendars. When Julius Caesar came into power in Rome shortly before the beginning of the Christian era, he found the calendar in a state of hopeless confusion and subject to the caprice of the ruling factions. After consulting the best talent he could find in the empire, he concluded that the year was exactly $365\frac{1}{4}$ days long. As fractions of a day were out of the question in a calendar, since they would oblige us to begin all our days in one year at midnight, in the next at sunrise, in the third at noon, in the fourth at sunset, and in the fifth again at midnight, and so on, he ordered that three years in succession should each consist of 365 days, and the fourth should have 366. This system in which every fourth year is a leap year, that is, has one day more than a common year, is called the Julian calendar.

Julius Caesar also put order into the months. He gave all the odd months, that is January, March, May, and so on, 31 days, and all the even months 30 days, except February, which was to have only 29 days in common years and the full 30 only in leap years. This was surely a very orderly and reasonable arrangement, except that we might suggest to have the leap year day at the end of December instead of at the end of February,

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that is, give February always 30 days and December ordinarily 29 days, but 30 in leap years. But Caesar really had forestalled our idea, since February was for centuries the last month of the year and March its first month. To begin the year with the beginning of spring was surely superior to our method of beginning the year after one-third of the winter season has passed.

However, Julius Caesar could not force his successors to obey his orders. Augustus Caesar thought he could legislate as well as his uncle, Julius. While he kept the number of days in the years, he changed those of some of the months. As Julius had changed the name of the fifth month (our seventh) Quintilis, to Julius, our July, Augustus appropriated the next one, Sextilis, and called it by his own name, Augustus, our August. This may be pardonable, but as July had 31 days and August, an even month, only 30, he gave August 31 days by filching one day from February. But as that would put three months in succession with 31 days, that is, July, August and September, he exchanged the 30 and 31 days in the following four months, thereby giving us our present arbitrary and unreasonable arrangement. As this scheme has seven, instead of six months with 31 days, February must be content with only 28 in ordinary years and with 29 in leap years, and thus never gets 30 like many of the other months. This arrangement has persisted unchanged for 1900 years. And that in this long period of nineteen centuries there should be one and only one February with thirty days, and that only in one nation, is surely odd, and enough to arouse our curiosity as to how it happened. Well, we are coming to it.

A few centuries after the introduction of the Julian calendar, which made every fourth year a leap year, it was noticed that the Julian year of 365 days and 6 hours was too long by 11 minutes and 15 seconds, and that the neglect of this difference amounted to a whole day in 133 years, or to three days in four centuries. The reform of this error was discussed for many centuries. With characteristic prudence the Roman Pontiffs refused to correct it until its recurrence had been securely provided against. It was only in 1582 that Gregory XIII, after

whom our calendar is now called the Gregorian calendar, ordered the ten days, to which the error had accumulated, to be struck out of the calendar of that year, by calling the day following October 4, October 15, and by dropping three leap years in four centuries, that is, by making all years ending in 00, such as 1700, 1800, 1900, etc., common years of 365 days, except when they were divisible by 400, such as 1600, 2000, in which latter case they should remain leap years as usual.

The Gregorian calendar was accepted at once by all the Catholic nations of Europe. But the Protestant ones, such as Germany, England, and the northern countries, refused to adopt it. The consequence may be imagined, great misunderstanding and confusion in regard to dates. This persisted for a century or more. As the year 1700 was approaching it was to be a common year of 365 days according to the Gregorian calendar, and a leap year according to the old Julian calendar. This would increase the difference of the calendars to eleven days, the year 1800 would make it twelve, and the year 1900 thirteen days.

Things were becoming intolerable. As the Gregorian calendar was universally acknowledged to be the correct one, was actually in use by most of the nations of Europe, and was sure to be eventually adopted by the whole world, it was certainly the better policy to make the change, the sooner the better. Sweden was willing to adopt the Gregorian reform, but did not like dropping ten or eleven days wholesale from its calendar. It bethought itself therefore of another expedient. It proposed to drop the ten or eleven days one at a time, by suppressing as many leap years. Accordingly it made 1700 a common year by giving February only 28 days that year. It intended to do the same in 1704, 1708, and so on until 1744, which would be the first leap year in its calendar since 1696. It would thus gradually, instead of suddenly, introduce the Gregorian calendar.

But after dropping the 29th of February in 1700, Sweden became painfully aware of the awkward fact that it had a third calendar altogether peculiar to itself, which was neither Old Style nor New Style. In four years more it would have another

calendar again, and again another in another four years. Forty-four years of "confusion worse confounded" were looming up gloomily before it. And even after that long disorderly period would be over, it would have the Catholic calendar differing eleven days from that of its Protestant friends.

King Charles XII then took the law into his own hands. He thought that things were bad enough as they were, and should not be made worse every four years by introducing eleven different calendars in succession into the kingdom. He therefore called a halt in this calendar-making, and ordered the Swedish calendar to remain as it was, and the years 1704, 1708, and so forth, to be leap years as of old.

While this order was possibly the least of the many evils, it held out however no prospect whatsoever of relief, so that the Swedish calendar remained to be neither fish nor flesh, neither Gregorian nor Julian, and altogether unique among the nations of the world.

After ten years of this unreasonable confusion Charles XII again acted without counsel and ordered a return to the old and nearer calendar, the Julian. As a day had been omitted by dropping February 29, 1700, he commanded that an extra day should be introduced after February 29, 1712. And in spite of the universal protest of the nation, the king's order went into effect. And this is how it happened that there was one and only one February 30 during the nineteen centuries that had rolled by since the days of Julius Caesar. Sweden thus returned to the Old Style in company with its northern neighbors. But when England finally yielded in 1752 and adopted the Gregorian calendar by ordering the day after September 2 to be September 14 for that year, Sweden followed its example the year after. This closes its history of calendar making and our article.